



Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center "Quick Hits"



June 2012

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Basics

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious bacterial disease of the respiratory tract that is spread by coughing. While pertussis affects people of all ages, infants too young to be fully vaccinated are at greatest risk for severe disease. Washington State's Health Secretary recently declared an epidemic following the state's worst [pertussis outbreak](#) in decades. A 2010 pertussis epidemic in California resulted in over 9,000 cases, including 10 infant deaths.

Introduction of pertussis vaccine in the 1940s substantially reduced the incidence of pertussis illness and deaths. But despite sustained high coverage for childhood pertussis vaccination, pertussis remains poorly controlled. Over 27,550 pertussis cases were reported to the CDC in 2010.

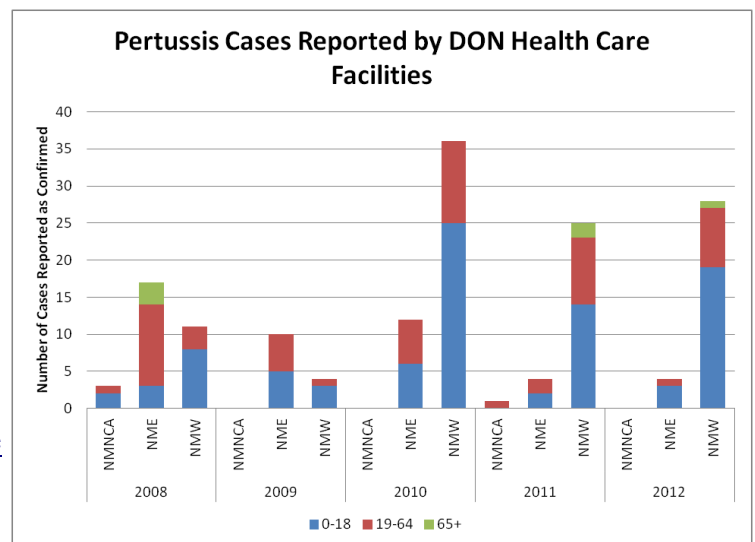
While the highest pertussis incidence is among children younger than 6 months of age, in recent years adolescents (11–18 years of age) and adults (19 years and older) have accounted for an increasing proportion of cases. Disease in adolescents and adults is often milder than in infants and children. However persons with mild disease may transmit the infection and older persons often serve as the source of infection for children.

Immunization Recommendations and Reporting Requirements

A high level of vaccination coverage is needed to reduce pertussis incidence in a community. [The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) recommends:

- ▶ A four-dose primary series of DTaP, administered at 2, 4, 6 and 15–18 months of age, followed by a fifth booster dose given at 4–6 years.
- ▶ A dose of Tdap for adolescents (ages 11–18)
- ▶ A dose of Tdap for adults (ages 19–64) who have not previously received Tdap.

Pertussis is a reportable condition per [BUMEDINST 6220.12C](#). Suspect and confirmed cases of pertussis as well as suspect and confirmed pertussis outbreaks should be reported using the [Navy Disease Reporting System internet \(DRSi\)](#) or other approved means. Between 2008-2012 DRSi received 155 reports of pertussis from DON healthcare facilities.



POC and Links

- NMCPHC Homepage: <http://www.nmcphe.med.navy.mil/>
- DRSi: http://www.nmcphe.med.navy.mil/Preventive_Medicine/Disease_Surveillance/med_event_reporting.aspx
- CDC "Pink Book": <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/pert.html>
- NEPMU2 Norfolk, VA: NEPMU2NorfolkThreatAssessment@med.navy.mil
- NEPMU5 San Diego, CA: ThreatAssessment@med.navy.mil
- NEPMU6 Pearl Harbor, HI: NEPMU6Threatassessment@med.navy.mil